DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 405 469 CE 073 662

AUTHOR	Donoghue, Janet
TITLE	Moving on from Key Stage 4--the Challenge for FE. FEDA Paper.
INSTITUTION	Further Education Development Agency, London (England).
REPORT NO	ISSN-1361-9977
PUB DATE	97
NOTE	34p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Further Education Development Agency, Publications Dept., Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol BS18 6RG, England, United Kingdom (6.50 British pounds).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
JOURNAL CIT	FE Matters; v1 n8 1997
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; *Articulation (Education); *British National Curriculum; Case Studies; College School Cooperation; Cooperative Planning; Educational Cooperation; *Educational Needs; Educational Opportunities; Employment Qualifications; Foreign Countries; *Partnerships in Education; Postsecondary Education; Prior Learning; Secondary Education; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	*General National Vocational Qualif (England); *National Vocational Qualifications (England); United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

A study examined the practical issues involved in providing continuity/progression for students who had undertaken General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) programs at key stage 4 of the British National Curriculum, and who were moving on to further study in post-16 colleges. Data were gathered through a survey of colleges and local education authorities and case studies of 10 further education (FE) colleges that had established partnerships with schools. It was discovered that some schools offer GNVQ Part 1 or units of vocational qualifications as options along with the General Certificate of Secondary Education, whereas other schools offer the same qualifications in partnership with local FE colleges. Most partnership activities involving GNVQs/NVQs were prompted by the desire to improve opportunities for learners, enhance quality of provision, and improve learning progression from 14 to 19. Among the identified benefits of vocationally focused partnership activities for colleges were the following: higher profile for vocational courses; better information about students who move from school to college; higher recruitment rates; improved retention rates; and development of trust between colleges and partner schools. Issues for senior managers, program managers, and program team members were identified. (Contains 12 references.) (MN)

ED 405 469

FEDA Further Education Development Agency

Moving on from Key Stage 4 — the challenge for FE

Janet Donoghue

Volume 1 Number 8

FE MATTERS

FEDA paper

CE073662

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Moving on from Key Stage 4— the challenges for FE

Janet Donoghue

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FEDA paper

Published by the Further Education Development Agency
Coombe Lodge, Blagdon, Bristol BS18 6RG
Telephone 01761 462503
Fax 01761 463140 (Publications Department)

Registered charity no: 1044145

Series edited and designed by the FEDA publications department
Printed by Blackmore Press, Shaftesbury, Dorset
Cover photograph: by Frank Ainsworth, loaned by Croydon College

ISSN: 1361-9977

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Acknowledgements

FEDA is grateful to all those who contributed to the project. Particular thanks are due to:

Janet Donoghue — Project Consultant
Pauline Sparkes — Education Staff, FEDA

Colleges

- Barnsley College
- Bishop Auckland College
- Bolton College
- Bournemouth & Poole College
- City & Islington College
- Colchester Institute
- Havering College
- Leeds College of Technology
- Manchester College of Arts & Technology
- Monkwearmouth College
- Pembrokeshire College
- St Helens College
- St John Rigby Sixth Form College
- Sandwell College
- Sheffield College
- South Nottingham College
- Telford College of Arts & Technology
- West Cheshire College
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Local Education Authorities

- Durham
- East Sussex
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Foreword

This paper reports on research carried out in 1995 on providing progression for students entering further education (FE) with a wider vocational-based set of achievements. The findings are extremely timely and have particular importance in relation to proposals within the *Review of qualifications for 16-19 year olds* by Sir Ron Dearing. This review signals an appreciation of the potential motivational impact of the vocational curriculum for 14-16 year olds, and it indicates how an increase in the number of school-college partnerships will benefit more learners with a wider range of opportunities available to them.

This report on FEDA research identifies issues for management and curriculum continuity arising from provision of a greater range of vocational opportunities for 14-16 year olds.

As learners begin their 16 plus learning careers with a greater range of vocational achievement alongside their GCSEs, in the form of Part One GNVQs, single units of NVQs and GNVQs, the challenges for providers of post-16 education are increased. Among these new demands are the need to develop strategies to avoid duplication, ensure appropriate progression, maintain the impetus of learning and therefore to sustain motivation.

While this research examined institutions who have developed partnership arrangements to meet these demands, increasingly 16 year olds will progress outside such partnerships, so institutions, both schools and colleges, need to be prepared to meet their more complex needs.

FE is often characterised as arguing the need for flexibility and a unitised framework in order to respond to the varied needs of adults. What is clearly demonstrated by this report is that the pressure to provide for these needs is equally coming from 16 year olds themselves, as they enter FE.

Caroline Mager
Head, Curriculum and Qualifications Programme

Context for this research

GNVQs and NVQs are increasingly being offered to students at Key Stage 4 (KS4) as a means of broadening the curriculum on offer.

Recent changes to National Curriculum requirements have 'freed up' 40 per cent of curriculum time at KS4, allowing schools to provide a vocational option for their students. This trend has been accelerated by the piloting of the GNVQ Part 1 qualification.

As a result, further education (FE) colleges need to be equipped to cater for an increasing number of students leaving school with vocational qualifications. Equally, school sixth-forms will need to respond to a changing pattern of achievement pre-16.

To facilitate smoother progression from pre-16 to post-16, some colleges are entering into partnerships with schools.

Aims and methods

In 1995 the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) commissioned a project to explore the practical issues involved in providing continuity and progression for students who had undertaken General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) programmes at Key Stage 4 (KS4) and were moving on to further study in post-16 colleges.

The aims of the study were to:

- gather information on the use of both GNVQs and NVQs at KS4
- explore vocationally-focused partnerships between schools and colleges and their impact on individual progression for 14-19 year olds
- identify the key issues for both schools and colleges

Information was gathered through a questionnaire survey of colleges and LEAs. Case study material was obtained from ten colleges that had established partnerships with schools. Some schools in the project were involved in the GNVQ Part 1 pilot but these are not necessarily a representative sample of all the schools involved in the pilots.

This report summarises the main findings of the project.

Schools: the emerging picture

Some schools offer units of GNVQ/NVQ within the context of National Curriculum and other subjects. Some offer GNVQ Part 1 or units of vocational qualifications as options alongside the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). In some cases they are offering these awards in partnership with their local further education college. In so doing, they benefit from the college's experience of delivering vocational qualifications as well as ensuring that their pupils have a smooth progression from KS4 to education and training post-16.

Issues for colleges

GNVQs and NVQs have a direct relationship with the curriculum offered in colleges.

Colleges need to consider the impact of their increased delivery at KS4 on:

- recruitment practices
- enrolment procedures including Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
- the structure of learning programmes
- the curriculum content of their own learning programmes
- progression routes
- practical aspects of vocational provision, for example, the awarding bodies used, verification procedures, record-keeping documentation required

School-college partnerships

Most partnership activities involving GNVQs and NVQs are prompted by the desire to:

- improve opportunities for learners
- enhance quality of provision
- improve learning progression from 14 to 19

Partnership activities can be formal or informal. Most have long-term aims but because there is limited access to long-term funding their survival depends on the goodwill of all those involved.

The range of partnership activities is extensive and involves college staff and students working with KS4 pupils, their parents and teachers, and representatives from other organisations such as careers services.

The impact that partnership activities may have on colleges include:

- better and more coherent links with local schools
- changes to the college curriculum to accommodate students arriving with GNVQ/NVQ units
- the need for improved guidance provision for students
- more specific assessment packages for GNVQ/NVQ programmes to allow the contributions of the KS4 curriculum and pupils' wider experiences to be taken into account for APL purposes

The benefits of vocationally-focused partnership activities for colleges include:

- a higher profile for vocational courses
- better information about students who move from school to college
- higher recruitment rates, learning progression for students and hence increased motivation
- improved retention rates
- the development of trust between a college and its partner schools

Issues for senior managers include:

- resourcing partnership activities
- taking responsibility for the management of partnership activities in college structures
- revising curriculum structures to accommodate pre-16 vocational attainments

Issues for programme managers include:

- gaining familiarity with schools
- acquiring knowledge of the KS4 curriculum
- understanding the legal requirements related to staffing
- offering professional development to staff involved
- timetabling partnership activities
- improving attitudes towards pre-16 vocational attainments
- providing suitable learning programmes for students arriving with pre-16 vocational attainments
- identifying progression routes
- ensuring equal treatment of the partner schools involved

Issues for members of the programme teams include:

- organising and implementing partnership activities
- deciding upon teaching materials and teaching methods
- allowing for the fact that KS4 pupils often require more support to deal with a more independent learning approach

Conclusions

Vocational partnership activities have an important role to play in helping to secure smooth progression for individuals moving from pre- to post-16 education. However, to achieve this there are various practical issues that need to be considered by colleges, their partners and by national bodies.

Issues for colleges and their partners include how best to:

- accommodate students with pre-16 vocational achievements
- co-ordinate partnership activities
- ensure familiarity with the working practices of each partner
- help college staff to appreciate the implications for them of the increased use of GNVQs and NVQs at KS4

Issues for national bodies include how best to:

- secure curriculum continuity in vocational studies pre- and post-16
- support vocational partnership activities as a means of securing smooth transition
- ensure the currency of GNVQ/NVQ units attained pre-16
- ensure that the introduction of the GNVQ Part 1 is supported by smooth progression post-16
- ensure that guidance provision takes account of the range of progression routes available

1. National Curriculum and vocational education at KS4

Since September 1996 maintained schools have offered the following National Curriculum programmes of study at KS4:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science (a single science is the minimum requirement)
- Design and Technology (the minimum requirement is a short course covering half the content of a GCSE, accredited A to G)
- Information Technology (as a separate subject or co-ordinated across other curriculum subjects)
- Modern Foreign Languages (minimum of a short course)
- Physical Education

Schools also have to provide religious education and sex education.

Schools can offer the following vocational options at KS4:

- GNVQ Part 1 (at this stage, only available to those acting as a pilot centre; it is intended that it be available nationally from September 1998)
- full GNVQ
- individual units of GNVQ/NVQ
- other vocational awards, for example, City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education (DVE) and RSA Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT)

GNVQ Part 1 is offered in the following programme areas:

- Business
- Health and Social Care
- Manufacturing
- Art and Design
- IT
- Leisure and Tourism

IT is offered at Intermediate and Foundation levels and comprises three vocational units taken from the full award (common to all awarding bodies), the associated external tests, the three key skills units, a controlled assignment and an extension test (for merits and distinctions). There are currently 253 schools in 71 local education authorities (LEAs) involved in the GNVQ Part 1 pilot. Figures on how many are offering other GNVQs or NVQs at KS4 are not available. While some schools deliver the vocational options as discrete units, in others their delivery is integrated into National Curriculum and other subjects, for example, units of Health and Social Care as part of the GCSE Science course and units of manufacturing through National Curriculum Design and Technology.

College and LEA staff who contributed to the project commented on the increase in the number of requests from schools for information and advice on how to design and deliver vocational programmes.

Although interest in the use of GNVQs and NVQs is increasing there was considerable variation between areas as to the extent of actual use, ranging from some areas where nearly all secondary schools offered either full or partial awards to others where it was only a minority of schools. The key determining factor appeared to be the extent to which Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), LEAs and FE providers were promoting and supporting their use.

Benefits of offering GNVQs and NVQs pre-16

The main reasons for using vocational qualifications for 14-16 year olds were to:

- broaden students' horizons
- increase students' awareness of the knowledge, skills and attitudes valued in the world of work and beyond

- improve students' motivation, attainment and achievement
- improve progression from school to FE and widen the range of opportunities post-16
- enhance the statutory curriculum
- develop the personal skills required for lifelong learning and employment

Factors influencing use of GNVQs/NVQs at KS4

The pattern of use of GNVQs and NVQs in schools was influenced by a variety of factors, the most significant being the:

- level of staff experience and expertise
- resources available in the locality
- level of pupil interest
- progression routes available at local FE institutions
- advice given by local partners, such as colleges, TECs, Education Business Partnerships (EBPs), and LEAs

Most schools which took part in this project (with the exception of those piloting GNVQ Part 1) were offering units rather than full GNVQ and NVQ awards. There are various benefits of this approach:

- units provide greater flexibility than the full award. They can be selected from different programmes and levels, and can have either a vocational or a key skills focus. This makes it easier for schools to respond to a range of individual student needs
- units are considered to be more cost-effective than the full award. Careful choice of units can limit the additional demands on resources and staff expertise. Units can often be accommodated within existing working arrangements and be taught within existing courses
- units are considered to support individual progression as effectively as a full award and in some cases to be more manageable for post-16 providers. They allow students to become familiar with the nature and demands of GNVQs and NVQs and to develop the planning, learning and self-management skills required for their achievement. They also enable students to gather evidence from across the KS4 National Curriculum for APL or for fast-tracking to post-16 levels if a partnership with the receiving institutions exists

Programmes on offer

Evidence from this research project indicates that the most popular GNVQ programme areas were:

- Business
- Health and Social Care
- Leisure and Tourism
- Art and Design

The most popular NVQ areas were:

- Construction Crafts
- Business Administration
- Child Care and Education
- Catering and Hospitality
- Sport and Recreation

Some schools were focusing on the delivery of key skills units at KS4. The main reasons for this were:

- the links with the statutory curriculum
- that evidence of attainment could be collected from across all National Curriculum areas
- that key skills attainment was regarded by many as the most important factor in securing smooth progression to post-16 programmes

The 'freeing up' of the National Curriculum since September 1996 and the inclusion of GNVQ Part 1 in the school performance tables may further encourage schools to incorporate more vocational programmes/units at KS4.

Developments within the qualifications themselves will also encourage their use. For example, the GNVQ Language units will fulfil the Modern Foreign Language requirements of the National Curriculum and the Key Skill Information Technology (IT) unit will contribute to the IT requirements.

Management and delivery pre-16

Evidence from this project indicates that schools' management, organisation and delivery of vocational programmes at KS4 evolves from year to year. However, the following findings are worthy of comment:

- in all institutions the senior management team had given its support to the introduction of vocational options at KS4
- the most successful programmes had clear policy statements setting out aims and objectives, the resource implications (including staffing) and working arrangements (including timetabling and recruitment)
- day-to-day management of programmes was generally the responsibility of middle managers or of the individual subject teachers
- vocational programmes were accommodated within the existing timetable arrangements — in practice, this meant offering full or partial GNVQs/NVQs as an option alongside GCSEs or integrating them within existing courses, such as PSE

Many schools were delivering GNVQs and NVQs at KS4 with support from external organisations, such as TECs, LEAs and colleges. The main forms of this support were:

- the development of a local strategy for promoting and supporting the use of GNVQs and NVQs
- access to additional financial, human and physical resources
- help with training and also with development activities
- mentoring
- assistance with developing networking activities with other interested parties such as local employers

In most schools only a small proportion of curriculum time was given to vocational courses — ranging from five to 12 per cent — except where schools were piloting GNVQ Part 1, when more time was allowed. Awarding bodies recommend 20 per cent of curriculum time for these courses. In all cases, the success of the vocational programmes was dependent upon the 'goodwill' time provided by both staff and pupils.

The number of staff involved in delivering GNVQs and NVQs at KS4 tended to be small, often only one or two subject specialists. Several schools commented on the difficulty of involving more staff in vocational projects, especially those who might contribute to the delivery and assessment of key skills. This creates a situation where the knowledge and expertise in vocational education is concentrated on just a few staff, which in the long term has unfavourable implications for ensuring continuity.

Even where schools were receiving support from outside agencies they identified several issues concerning the implementation of GNVQs and NVQs. These were:

- managing the additional workload
- developing and maintaining a high quality vocational experience for their students
- offering a sufficiently wide choice of vocational areas

- **identifying the links between GNVQs, NVQs, GCSEs and other courses**
- ensuring that the requirements of vocational courses fit in with whole curriculum planning
- identifying and assessing opportunity costs for students
- recognising and building on links with other school activities
- developing positive attitudes to GNVQs and NVQs from among staff, parents and students

Appropriacy

Managers in schools endorsed GNVQs and NVQs as being an appropriate option for students of all abilities. However, in practice where they were offered as a separate option against GCSEs they tended to be chosen by students of middle and lower abilities. There is some evidence from the project that guidance from school staff is supporting this trend. One college noted:

> *"In Year 10, more capable pupils were given advice that encouraged them to opt for a second humanities course rather than a GNVQ unit. There are several statemented pupils on the GNVQ courses."*

Contributors to the project also expressed concern that teachers were guiding 'difficult' students towards vocational courses which had little relationship to their expressed interests. Placement on inappropriate courses only compounds issues of underachievement and lack of motivation among these students. The perception among teachers that vocational programmes are for the less able or demotivated is an issue which needs to be addressed. While GNVQs and NVQ do have an important role in addressing low achievement and motivation problems, teachers also need to be aware of their appropriacy and value to the entire ability range.

2. Implications for post-16 institutions

The increasing use of GNVQs and NVQs at KS4 means that further education institutions will need to review their provision and services in order to accommodate those students who arrive with experience of vocational programmes.

Some contributors to the project expressed the view that the actual numbers of students arriving at college with vocational qualifications was too small to worry about. However, evidence from the project suggests that these numbers are increasing, especially with the introduction of GNVQ Part 1 and the inclusion of these qualifications in school performance tables. September 1997 will see the first cohort of 16 year olds entering college with a GNVQ Part 1 qualification.

One participating college already receiving students with KS4 experience of GNVQs and NVQs noted:

> *"The use of GNVQs and NVQs at KS4 provides a big challenge for FE in providing tailor-made programmes matching student needs. Any sudden expansion in the use of vocational qualifications at KS4 could leave colleges unprepared and risk alienating and/or demotivating students who were successful at KS4 but find themselves repeating work at college."*

Curriculum design and delivery

Many students will arrive at college with an understanding of GNVQs and NVQs and also of the learning and assessment goals that these qualifications involve. Some will have formal accredited evidence of their vocational achievements while others may arrive with a portfolio of evidence for a range of vocational and key skill units.

A key consideration for colleges will be how to respond to the breadth of students' prior achievements and attainments, ranging from some who have covered individual units to those with a full GNVQ Part 1 award which they may wish to 'top up'. Colleges in the project were responding to this challenge in a variety of ways, including:

- organising GNVQ and NVQ programmes into modules so that students with partial awards could pursue related studies at the times when their peers were completing units they had already achieved
- expanding the range of post-16 courses on offer
- basing teaching programmes on detailed curriculum maps indicating how GCSE, GNVQ and NVQ are interrelated

Colleges were also researching the potential to provide a fast-track learning programme for students arriving with partial GNVQs and NVQs so that they completed both the initial award and the next level within the standard timescale. As none had found a way of achieving this, programme costs were not being reduced.

Colleges also noted the need to consider the key skill support required by students arriving with prior experience of GNVQs and NVQs. It is common for these students to have achieved higher levels of attainment in the vocational units than in key skills. As a result, they will need to upgrade their key skill attainment before moving on to the next level.

Providing for progression

One of the main reasons schools give for offering GNVQs and NVQs at KS4 is to improve progression post-16. However, the nature of the progression opportunities available to their pupils was not always clear. Colleges involved in this project reported that in the majority of cases progression routes were based on individual negotiation.

To secure smooth progression for individuals, there must be effective communication and liaison between schools and receiving institutions.

All those contributing to the project stressed the need for schools, colleges and careers services to work together to give students enhanced advice and guidance on appropriate progression routes. College staff have found it helpful to become involved in careers education and guidance to ensure continuity and progression from 14 to 19. In some cases this has prompted college staff to review their recruitment, enrolment, induction and APL procedures and to ensure that their prospectuses include GNVQ and NVQ attainments in their entry requirements.

Some colleges are also investigating ways of tracking students who arrive with full or partial GNVQs or NVQs, to ensure successful completion of their chosen programme.

Summary

To provide for students with prior GNVQ and NVQ experience colleges should:

- work with schools to ensure that subjects offered pre-16 are also available post-16 at the same or higher levels
- ensure that programmes can be of varying lengths post-16 to accommodate differing levels of attainment pre-16
- have a variety of induction processes available to take account of differing pre-16 experiences and achievements
- develop more sophisticated APL
- recognise pre-16 achievements in their marketing and recruitment literature

3. Partnership activities

Colleges become involved in partnership activities for a variety of reasons, including:

- to improve opportunities for learners and enhance the quality of provision
- to improve progression from 14 to 19
- to respond to the increasing use of GNVQs and NVQs at KS4
- to respond to requests from schools for help and advice
- to improve recruitment to vocational courses post-16 by raising awareness of the nature, scope and demands of GNVQs and NVQs and their links with the KS4 curriculum
- to raise awareness of college provision and services

Nature of partnerships

Many partnerships, especially the well-established ones, are based on formal systems such as franchising, compacts and written progression agreements. Others are more flexible and less formal but in the long term are looking to develop written partnership agreements and statements outlining the working arrangements.

Partnerships create opportunities to pool different resources for the benefit of all involved. They encourage the sharing of information, expertise, capital equipment and workload. Nevertheless, while all partnerships have long-term aims, few have access to long-term funding. Most rely heavily on the goodwill of those involved. The challenge facing most partnerships is how to sustain their activities at a time when there is severe pressure on resources — vocational provision has proven to be particularly vulnerable when schools need to make budget cuts.

Common activities

For 13 to 16 year olds

- Offering taster experiences of vocational programmes, from half-day events to study placements of up to three weeks.
- Giving careers education and guidance to inform pupils about the nature, scope and requirements of vocational programmes and to provide advice tailored to individual needs. This may be in the form of special events, such as vocational conventions, or it could be built into a school's existing careers education programme.
- Assisting with the identification and gathering of evidence of attainment in vocational and key skill areas to be used for APL and fast-tracking post-16.
- Mentoring by college staff and students.
- Organising interviews with targeted pupils or on a self-referral basis to explore progression opportunities and possible routes post-16.

For school staff

- Providing professional development training on such areas as:

  i) the nature, scope and requirements of GNVQs and NVQs

  ii) curriculum mapping, developing vocational assignments, producing teaching materials, and establishing assessment and verification procedures

  iii) Training Development Lead Body (TDLB) for the D units where a school offers NVQ and/or GNVQ units and General Planning and Assessment (GPA) units where provision is limited to GNVQs.

- Helping with applications to awarding and funding bodies.

- Giving access to college networks and resources, including accommodation, equipment and staff.

For parents of KS4 students

- Arranging information evenings on vocational activities and subsequent progression opportunities that are available for their children.
- Issuing reports on the vocational activities in which their children have been involved.
- Contributing to general parents' evenings to provide information on college provision and services and to highlight possible progression routes.

For college students

- Mentoring of KS4 pupils.
- Taking part in taster activities offered to KS4 pupils.

For college staff

- Raising general awareness within the college of the nature and scope of the curriculum at KS4 and the likely attributes of those students arriving with experience of GNVQs and NVQs.
- Identifying possible progression routes for students arriving with some experience of GNVQs and NVQs.
- Encouraging modifications in college structures and systems to provide better curriculum continuity and progression for students arriving with prior vocational experience.
- Contributing to the development and inspection of vocational provision in the partner schools.

4. Case studies

Case Study 1

This college is the main provider of further and higher education in its borough and is also long recognised as a key provider of higher education courses on a more regional basis. It has an enrolment of approximately 4,000 full-time equivalents.

The college offers a comprehensive programme of day and evening classes in academic, professional, vocational and craft courses, catering for all age groups.

Throughout the area the number of people qualified to diploma, degree or higher degree level is low. Historically, there has been low participation in post-16 education, although these figures have shown a dramatic improvement during the last few years. However, as the economy gradually improves indications are that recruitment levels of full-time students will stabilise.

The ethnic minority and refugee population in the college's borough is extremely small (approximately two to three per cent). The unemployment figures vary considerably within the borough from some areas where just three per cent of the population are unemployment claimants to other areas, mainly to the north and south of the borough, where the figure rises to 11 per cent; the borough average is 6.1 per cent.

The college has links with three partner schools, two of which are 11-16 mixed comprehensives and the third is an 11-18 voluntary-aided mixed comprehensive.

School A is a small school of 571 students with a strong emphasis on community and personal development. It was the first organisation in the borough to obtain 'Investors in People' status. Parents of the pupils are predominantly working class with no FE background, and a significant proportion are unemployed.

School B has a multi-ethnic population of 1,006 pupils with English as a second language. Most of the parents are working class, and a high proportion are unemployed. Traditionally, the number of students who progress to post-16 education is low.

School C is a Catholic school drawing its 1,058 pupils from the diocese, so it has a wide catchment area. Although the school is situated in a multi-cultural area, the pupil population does not reflect this. The school has its own sixth-form.

Nature of links with partner schools

School A

As a partner school, each of its students is guaranteed a place on an appropriate course at either the college of this case study or the local sixth form college.

The school negotiates two-day vocational taster courses with the college for Year 10 pupils during their Flexible Learning Week in the summer term.

A group of pupils is studying GCSE Construction at the college (this is in its second year of operation). All GCSE Business Studies pupils are also undertaking Unit 1 of GNVQ Business (Foundation), also in its second year of operation. The school's Business Studies department cross-referenced GCSE Business Studies with GNVQ Business (Foundation) and identified the unit which, with some amendment to the teaching of the business programme, met the criteria of both. The activities used as a learning tool for the GCSE Business provide the evidence for the GNVQ Business unit. College staff advise on this process and act as internal verifiers. They also provide a supportive/consultative service via termly meetings and a telephone hot-line. It is too early to identify the outcomes from the introduction of vocational courses at KS4, however the immediate result has been to raise the level of importance attached to course work.

All Year 10 pupils are undertaking Unit 1 of GNVQ Health and Social Care (Intermediate) as part of their Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme (this is in its first

year of operation). The school team delivering the PSHE programme identified elements which matched the contents of Unit 1 of the GNVQ. They meet with college staff twice a term to discuss issues and use college expertise and experience to devise and manage their own scheme. College staff also act as internal verifiers. Again it is too early to identify outcomes, but the school is convinced that the GNVQ unit work reinforces GCSE work in subjects such as science (and vice versa).

School B

The school planned to offer Unit 1 GNVQ Health and Social Care at KS4 in September 1996. The college helped school staff to design the programme and write schemes of work, drawing on its own experience as a successful provider of a full-time GNVQ programme, and from its work with School A. Using the college in this way allowed the school to devise and manage its own scheme.

School C

The school offers GNVQ Health and Social Care (Intermediate) to its Year 12 pupils. College staff provided INSET for school staff with responsibility for operating the programme and the college organises placements. This experience gave college staff valuable insights into the way that KS4 pupils work and the approaches they respond to which has enhanced their contribution to introducing KS4 vocational courses in other schools.

Progression

The first cohort of pupils to have participated in vocational qualifications at KS4 have yet to progress on to college. It is anticipated that the main issues are likely to include:

- the need to map the curriculum at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced levels so that it is possible for students with partial awards to complete both the original level award and the next level award within the standard time-scale
- **the need to devise an integrated system of teaching which enables a unit to be covered at both Intermediate and Advanced levels and, with tutorial support, to identify the evidence required to satisfy the particular level. This process would be assisted if any revision of standards indicates how the Intermediate level underpins the Advanced level**
- increased recruitment to GNVQ courses, because pupils (and teachers) will be more familiar with the GNVQ method of study and the pupils will have already achieved some credits towards one of these qualifications
- the need to find a successful method for accommodating students with partial awards. The following methods have been considered and rejected by this particular college:

  i) APL — it was considered that school leavers would not have sufficient independent learning skills at the entry stage to cope with this; in general, the college would need to develop a strategy to deal with this

  ii) enrolling directly on to the next level course — it was considered that without appropriate supporting GCSE qualifications the student with only a partial award would be unable to cope with the next level award

  iii) enrolling on to the compiete/ standard course — it was considered that this would create student (and school) alienation and would cause funding difficulties

  iv) credit accumulation — it was felt that ultimately this is the long-term solution but not feasible as a short- term option

Each institution would need to select the most appropriate method for each student concerned.

Evaluation

The main issues for the schools have been:

- identifying the links between the GCSE curriculum and GNVQ units
- time spent cross-referencing
- getting staff to TDLB standard
- adjusting to different and unfamiliar teaching styles

The benefits identified so far include:

- validity has been given to the PSHE programme (previously not accredited)
- GCSE teaching is reinforced by the GNVQ work
- because the GNVQ is vocational it is seen as relevant by pupils
- pupils see the greater practical content of GNVQ as more appropriate to their needs
- pupils enjoy the structured nature of the vocational programme
- the cumulative nature of the performance indicators helps to motivate pupils and identifies the skills they are achieving
- the assessment and accreditation of key skills units is to be investigated as a means of bench-marking. This would also provide an introduction to GNVQ which is not vocationally specific and allow schools to adopt a whole institution approach

The drawbacks for schools so far identified are:

- uncertainty of the standards expected
- the paperwork involved (for both teachers and pupils)
- the time spent ensuring that pupils are documenting their activities, and keeping up to date with their progress
- the cost, particularly as a result of having to bring in specialist staff
- the costs of resourcing the course, for example, some activities require equipment and resources not normally available in school

For the college, the main benefits have been, or are anticipated to be:

- improved awareness of vocational programme and qualifications by pupils, teachers and parents
- students who are familiar with the language, study and assessment methods of GNVQ
- improved retention rates on its GNVQ programmes

The drawbacks for the college are likely to be:

- the organisational issues created by the need to offer students more individualised programmes
- the curriculum development time required to ensure flexible provision
- adds complexity and recording difficulties to the programme planning

Case Study 2

This large tertiary college has a wide range of post-16 provision, and has expanded into higher education during the past few years. Despite the increasingly competitive further education environment, it also remains the near-monopoly provider of post-16 education in its metropolitan borough.

In 1994-1995, the college had more than 30,000 enrolments and more than 900,000 Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) 'units of activity'. At that time it also had more than 1,500 higher education students enrolled on a wide range of programmes.

Unemployment rates in the area are significantly higher than the national average.

The level of achievement in schools is reflected in the borough's position towards the bottom of the Government GCSE school performance

tables. Participation rates in post-16 education are also well below the national average.

The college is committed to improving participation rates and to playing a significant role in the economic and social regeneration of the area.

Background information

School A

School A is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive with approximately 600 pupils. At KS4 it is currently offering three units from GNVQ programmes (mandatory and optional). Pupils at the end of Year 9 were offered GNVQ units as an option to a second humanity GCSE or GCSE Technology.

The current take-up is as follows:

Course title	Number of students	
	Year 10	Year 11
Leisure and Tourism (Foundation)	13	11
Leisure and Tourism (Intermediate)	20	20
Health and Social Care (Foundation)	11	14
Health and Social Care (Intermediate)	6	5

The pupils were essentially self-selected. Year 11 covers a wide ability range but in Year 10 the more capable pupils were given advice which encouraged them to opt for a second humanities GCSE course rather then GNVQ units.

There are statemented pupils on the courses. There are slightly more boys than girls on the Leisure and Tourism courses. On the Health and Social Care courses the girls outnumber the boys.

School B

School B is the only Roman Catholic secondary school in the borough. An 11-16 mixed comprehensive, it is located on the outskirts of the town but draws its 630 pupils from a wider area than most schools in the borough because of its denominational character. At KS4 it is offering two to three GNVQ units in Art and Design at Intermediate level, integrated into GCSE Art and Design. The current take-up is:

Course title	Number of students	
	Year 10	Year 11
Art and Design (Intermediate)	5	8

The students were self-selected and highly motivated as they are required to carry out the extra work in their own time, during the lunch-break and after normal school hours. The Year 11 students have special needs. In the Year 10 group of four boys and one girl, the students are of higher ability and include one who is expected to obtain grade A at GCSE.

School C

School C is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive, primarily serving a mixed catchment area of suburbs and a village. It has 550 pupils.

At KS4 it has offered three units of GNVQ Art and Design at Intermediate level, integrated into the delivery of GCSE Art and Design.

The current take-up is:

Course title	Number of students	
	Year 10	Year 11
Art and Design (Intermediate)	see below	21

In Year 11 there are two groups of GCSE students of different ability ranges. Students in both groups were allowed to opt to do the GNVQ units in addition to their GCSE.

The same principle is being applied to the Year 10 students who are currently being asked to decide whether they wish to do the units.

School D

School D is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive located close to the town centre. It primarily serves its immediate locality and has 950 pupils. It is currently developing Level 1 NVQ units in Construction Crafts. Seven carefully-chosen middle ability range pupils attend the college on one morning per week to take advantage of its facilities and to be taught by its staff. They also have related work experience which may enable some of them to obtain full certification and move on to Level 2 units. The school is considering offering GNVQ Part 1 in Business Studies from 1997 and the college has provided some staff development in this area for a few of the school staff.

School E

School E is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive which has 700 pupils on its roll. About 70 pupils come from the edge of the town and most of the remainder are from a suburban housing estate and a nearby village. The school currently sends a group of low ability pupils with motivation problems to the college to follow a programme leading to NVQ Level 1 in Construction Crafts.

Nature of links with partner schools

As the main further education provider in its metropolitan borough, the college has developed considerable link programmes with partner schools. The longest standing is the Link Tutor System co-ordinated by the college's School Links Manager. Each partner school is allocated a member of the college staff as its Link Tutor who organises talks and visits to the college and co-ordinates in school the admissions procedure for students wishing to move on to the college.

More recent developments have included a project for disaffected pupils in school which involves these students taking part in various college activities and spending several days with the Army. Year 9 pupils in schools are involved in a Taster Programme which allows them to come into college and take part in an activity delivered by the programme area of their choice.

The college has just begun to pilot its Year 10 Link Programmes with some of the partner schools involved in this project. Schools can negotiate when a pupil comes into the college, at what time of the day and for how long. Daytime, twilight, evening and Saturday morning sessions will all be made available in a variety of vocational programme areas.

Potential students are invited into the college each June/July, once they have completed their GCSE examinations, to take part in an Exploration Week across all areas of college life where they can sample both A level and vocational programmes.

A college project group, chaired by the School Links Manager, is looking at ways to develop these programmes programmes further and to identify other measures for improving links.

GNVQ in schools

During 1993, a number of GNVQ awareness raising and staff development sessions were provided by the college's Curriculum Development and Support Unit for all partner schools, with the approval of the LEA's advisory service.

As a result of this initiative three schools decided to offer units of GNVQ starting in 1994. Since then, the GNVQ delivery teams in schools have met with the college's Curriculum Development and Support Team on a regular basis to receive support and guidance. The college also provided, at a cost to the schools, a trainer to enable school staff to achieve TDLB units D32 and D33.

Pupils on these original GNVQ unit programmes completed them in July 1996 — almost all completed one or two units at either Foundation or Intermediate level.

In September 1996, a new partner school used funding from the College Trust to begin a full GNVQ in Hospitality and Catering at Foundation level. This was to be delivered partly in school and partly at the college, using staff from both institutions.

Progression routes at 16

The normal formal progression requirements of the college for GNVQ programmes are:

Advanced	4 GCSEs at grades A-C
Intermediate	2 GCSEs at grades C/D
Foundation	GCSEs at grades E,F,G

For NVQ-based programmes the normal requirements are similar but more flexible.

Courses are also offered as required where the students study an individually-negotiated programme focusing largely on basic skills.

Effects on college structures

For progression purposes for students arriving at the college from September 1996 with pre-16 vocational experience, the college decided that three units of GNVQ Intermediate would count as two GCSE grade Cs and that three units at Foundation would be regarded as two GCSEs at grade D.

The college has compact arrangements with a number of the local schools. It requests evidence of successful completion of compact requirements both on its admission forms and at interview.

A survey carried out by the School Links Manager has identified that most of the potential students currently involved in GNVQ in Year 11 in partner schools are intending to follow GNVQ programmes in college, and at this stage were interested in the area in which they are currently involved.

Most, however, also expressed interest in other programme areas and intend to use their GNVQ units as GCSE equivalents to determine the level at which they will be admitted.

Individual programme areas will be faced with students who have partially completed a GNVQ. These programme areas are making plans to accommodate students arriving with a GNVQ to complete.

The Health and Social Care team is planning to offer a flexible programme of GNVQ unit delivery during the first term for Foundation and Intermediate level to allow students to complete the units which they still require. Key skills support will be available during this time and extra support offered in the Basic Skills, Mathematics, Communications and IT workshops which students will be able to access in the first term instead of work placement.

During the second and third terms students should then progress to the next level of GNVQ. To help them to complete the missed units they will be offered support from the college's Learning Centre. Alternatively, they can extend their programme into the next year. Very low ability students may be accommodated partly in GNVQ lessons and partly in Individual Needs sessions where they can receive specialised help with their literacy and numeracy skills.

The Leisure and Tourism (Sport) area proposes a similar scheme. In addition, students completing missing units for a Foundation award are offered the opportunity to take coaching awards, units of NVQ Level 1, a First Aid course and swimming certificates at the time when units they have already achieved are being delivered. More able students admitted to the Advanced programme will have opportunities to complete missing Intermediate units involving, in part, the use of flexible learning materials in the Learning Centres.

The Art and Design area proposes to fast-track students on to higher level GNVQs or allow them to complete outstanding units and then transfer them to a higher level programme as soon as they have achieved the full award at the lower level.

The School Links Manager is highlighting admissions forms from students applying to the college who have already achieved GNVQ units. These students will then be monitored closely to ensure they are offered the most suitable route for progression.

Evaluation

Schools

The main problems for the schools have been:

- very few staff have become involved; others may not want to become involved, but this would be required in order to deliver the key skills of the GNVQ Part 1
- no extra time has been provided for delivery, assessment, internal verification, staff development
- there is little, if any, integration of the key skills
- the initiative is costly, if delivered alongside GCSEs (because of the dual entry and registration this involves)
- units are not yet shown in school performance tables
- TDLB accreditation is time-consuming and costly
- it is difficult to overcome the perception of staff, parents and pupils that GNVQs are for the less able only

The main benefits identified so far include:

- the gradual introduction of a vocational element on a pilot basis
- FE support
- a lead-in to GNVQ Part 1
- students appear to enjoy the GNVQ approach which may improve motivation, increase achievement where they would not do so in GCSE, and hence improve progression

The main issues identified are:

- the need to address negative parental perceptions of colleges
- overcoming resistance from staff in other areas of the school
- the need to integrate key skills into GNVQ Part 1
- managing the implications for timetabling the various options
- securing commitment from senior management, in order to be effective

For the college the main problems are:

- the awarding body may not be the same one as they use
- 'three units equal two GCSEs' leaves the question, What do two or one units equal?
- accommodating recruits with partial awards into the programmes
- dealing with gaps in key skills
- funding issues, since programmes in college for pre-16s are costly and there is no FEFC funding
- difficult pupils may be put on to NVQ programmes

The benefits so far are:

- registration fees may have been pre-paid by the school
- the potential for improved recruitment, progression and motivation
- students come to post-16 education with prior experience of a GNVQ approach to learning
- closer links with partner schools
- possible increased recruitment

The main issues for the college are:

- the need to treat all partners equally conflicts with giving commitment to schools which show particular interest and enthusiasm
- the flexibility required in treatment of students' APL
- how to accommodate the few students who arrive with different units

Key messages for progression

For schools

Vocational qualifications at KS4 are likely to prove a popular option with pupils.

From the planning stage, it is worthwhile to make links with local colleges already providing GNVQ and to plan implementation jointly. Collaboration with FE institutions is essential if achievement is to be built upon but requires time and other resources, before and during implementation.

Schools can benefit from the experience of expert staff within the vocational area. It is beneficial to work with them to ensure that their programme takes students to acceptable standards which will allow continuity of experience when they move on to post-16 education. They also need to know what progression routes are available.

To help schools to embark on this route, there needs to be increased awareness of the importance of vocational education among educators, parents, pupils and employers, to overcome the labelling that it is for the less able only. Achieving an established 'currency' value for a GNVQ unit will help as will the possibility of National Certificate at Advanced level.

For colleges

KS4 vocational qualifications will present a big challenge to the further education sector to provide programmes which are tailor-made to students' needs. A sudden expansion of vocational qualifications at KS4 could leave colleges unprepared and risk alienating and demotivating students who were successful at KS4 but find themselves repeating work they have already successfully achieved.

FE colleges will have to develop informal progression arrangements with partner schools who decide to only offer units rather than a GNVQ Part 1 (when this becomes an available option to all schools from 1998). They will need to make use of flexible learning delivery styles to enable students with partially completed awards to 'top up' their qualification.

Collaboration between colleges, schools and careers services to continue to provide advice on future progression opportunities available is beneficial to all.

In summary, the crucial elements are:

- to establish the credit rating of units at a national level
- within each vocational area, to map the contents of units of each level with the level above to identify how each level supports and underpins the next stage
- to have SCAA and NCVQ, at a national level, continuing to work collaboratively to identify and clarify relationships between standards
- once the above have been achieved, to arrange for seminars and conferences and published materials to illustrate how standards link

5. Impact of partnership activities on colleges

Benefits to colleges of partnership activities with schools include:

- a higher profile for vocational courses
- better information about students who progress from school to college
- improved recruitment, progression and motivation of students
- improved retention rates
- the development of a relationship of trust between a college and its partner schools

The colleges involved in this project also identified a number of practical issues. These fall under three headings: those for senior managers; those for programme managers, and those for programme teams.

Senior management issues

Resources

Involvement in partnership activities is expensive, drawing on financial, human and physical resources that could otherwise be used purely for the benefit of a college's own staff and students.

Some college staff expressed concern that schools seemed to be receiving 'free' resources at a time when college budgets are stretched. There is also the issue of the additional workload created: much of the extra work generated has to be carried out in the staff's own time.

Senior managers need to look at re-organising staffing arrangements to allow time for partnership activities. They also need to be aware of the complexity involved in modifying curriculum structures to accommodate partnership activities and students enrolling with partial vocational qualifications.

Management structures

Partnership activities are most effective when the roles and responsibilities of those involved, including senior managers, are clearly defined and included in college management structures. Where this does not happen, problems occur. In some colleges, managers have created a dedicated school links team to co-ordinate vocational partnership activities. These seem to be most successful when they involve representatives from all the programme teams likely to participate in vocational partnership activities or to receive students who have been engaged in such activities.

Issues for programme managers

Planning partnership activities

Programme managers need to become familiar with the culture, organisation and management practices of schools in order to plan effective partnership activities. Schools' staff handbooks and prospectuses are often a good source of such information. To have meaningful discussions about curriculum links and continuity and the accreditation of prior learning, they need to acquire a detailed knowledge of KS4.

At a practical level, under the terms of the Children's Act staff require police clearance before they can work with pupils at KS4.

The professional development needs of school staff, and those of colleagues, should not be underestimated. Many college staff involved in this project expressed surprise that general awareness raising sessions were as valued by participants as, for example, assignment writing and TDLB sessions.

Different timetabling mechanisms used pre- and post-16 may result in a need to negotiate use of time outside of the normal school day, including half-term holidays.

In many cases, college staff will have to combat the view held in many schools that vocational qualifications are only for less able and disaffected pupils. They may also have to

persuade their own colleagues that pre-16 vocational attainments have the same currency as those achieved post-16.

Providing for these students post-16

Providing suitable programmes which accommodate students arriving with prior vocational experience was highlighted by all who contributed to this project as a major and extremely complex issue facing colleges. How, for example, should elements and single units or a pass in a GNVQ Part 1 be recognised in the college's course entry requirements? How much curriculum flexibility can be offered by means of additional studies and enrichment activities?

As pupils' curriculum experience at 14-16 expands, so does the range of options open to them post-16. This in turn means that it is more difficult to identify the most appropriate progression routes for some individuals.

Issues for programme teams

Organising activities

Making contact with school staff can be a more protracted experience than college staff expect, because of differing organisational and working practices. Any meetings or events that have to be cancelled can take a long time to rearrange. As a result, it often takes longer to implement partnership activities than is anticipated. One college staff member summarised the problem:

> *"The September/early October period is essentially dead time when both schools and colleges are settling in new intakes and are overwhelmed by attendant administration, while the post-Christmas period (especially February/March) leading to the end of the financial year is, in the current climate, causing (schools especially) major headaches on budget (and accompanying redundancies) which overshadow development work. Taster sessions, for example, can only be arranged to function in any significant way at points in the year when there is a lull in business. The end of June, as school-college years are structured at the moment, is about the only suitable time."*

Colleges found it useful to be involved in the school's decisions concerning:

- the choice of qualifications
- the choice of awarding body
- the curriculum content of vocational provision
- assessment and verification procedures
- recruitment to vocational courses at KS4
- advice and guidance on progression routes available

Teaching methods and materials

Developing teaching materials, including assignments, that can be used in more than one context has proved difficult for many college and school staff. Materials have to accommodate significant variations in the length of lessons and the teaching methods used. It is sometimes difficult to avoid reliance on worksheets and to maintain a degree of 'active' learning. Because of their unfamiliarity with GNVQs and NVQs, most school staff welcome help with developing teaching materials and are happy to explore different teaching methods.

Characteristics of KS4 pupils

College staff found that pupils at KS4 require more support and closer monitoring than post-16 students, particularly at the beginning of their vocational studies. For this reason, many activities include 'induction' exercises that focus on independent learning skills. In some cases, experience of working with KS4 pupils has prompted college staff to review induction programmes for post-16 students.

Vocational courses are used to motivate low attaining and/or disaffected pupils. This may be hard to achieve if vocational provision ignores pupils' needs and interests. Several college staff noted problems with discipline and motivation in circumstances where pupils were unable to take programmes in the vocational areas they had requested.

Planning for expansion

As the use of GNVQ and NVQ at KS4 expands more college staff from different programme areas will need to become involved in partnership activities. This may lead to unnecessary duplication of effort, inefficient use of resources and conflicting messages being received by schools regarding college policy and practice. Consequently, it is important to ensure that links with schools are effectively co-ordinated. This could be achieved via the appointment of a school links co-ordinator; alternatively, the roles and responsibilities of the personnel involved could be included in college management structures.

APL

College staff are beginning to develop more specific assessment packages for GNVQ and NVQ programmes to allow for the potential contribution of the KS4 curriculum and students' wider experiences to be taken into account for APL purposes. Some of these packages are also being used at KS4. The availability of more specific assessment packages also benefits other areas. They:

- help to clarify the quality of the students' vocational attainments, especially in terms of the level of their understanding
- make it easier to match students to appropriate courses
- make it easier to diagnose the nature and extent of learning support required by a particular student

6. Conclusions

Staff in schools and colleges are keen to secure smooth progression for students and it is clear that vocational partnership activities have an important role in helping them to achieve this. However, there are various practical issues that need to be considered further by colleges, their partners and by national bodies for partnership activities to fulfil this role.

Issues for colleges and schools

Accommodating students with pre-16 vocational attainments

Many vocational partnership activities give pupils the opportunity to work towards units from GNVQs and NVQs, either as a taster or enrichment experience or to provide a platform for progression to post-16 programmes in related areas. Where work is formally accredited, students are likely to arrive at college having already achieved between one and three units.

Unless students arrive with a GNVQ Part 1 it is likely that units covered by students from different schools will vary considerably, even within a single subject area.

It is not yet clear how possession of partial qualifications will support individual progression post-16. What is clear is that students will expect their achievements to be taken into account by a college, particularly where that college has helped them to achieve the qualification.

Colleges will have to decide how to treat the achievement of one, two or three units for APL purposes when setting entry requirements for courses and devising learning programmes.

Evidence suggests that this issue is easier to deal with when decisions about what units to offer at KS4 are the result of joint planning between a school and a college. Colleges are advised to consider this aspect of progression when they embark on vocational partnership activities with schools.

A common sentiment expressed during the project was that:

> *"Progression is a minefield that this college has yet to address."*

There is no doubt that college staff need help to assess the implications of the increased use of GNVQs and NVQs at KS4. Progression issues need to be included in both forward planning and staff development.

Co-ordinating partnership activities

Contributing to partnership activities ties up scarce resources for all involved which makes it imperative that partnership activities have defined objectives or outcomes and are co-ordinated. There were cases among the project participants where staff in one part of a college were unaware that colleagues in another programme area were also involved in partnership activities.

Careful planning is essential to ensure that these activities:

- meet an identified need
- have a clear purpose
- have defined objectives
- are clearly structured
- are costed
- are co-ordinated

Lack of familiarity with each other's work created a barrier to effective partnership activities between schools and colleges, although in general this did not become a problem until partners moved from planning to implementation stage. Both schools and colleges may wish to consider using some of their staff development time to fill this knowledge gap.

Many college staff seemed unaware of the use of GNVQs and NVQs at KS4 and few seemed to appreciate the progression and curriculum design implications of the introduction of the GNVQ Part 1 into schools. Although still in the

pilot phase the Government has agreed to include Part 1 in school performance tables from September 1997. This is likely to increase its take up when it is ready for national delivery from September 1998.

Issues for national bodies

This project has proved the value of vocational partnership activities to all involved. It has also highlighted that most partnerships depend upon goodwill and subsidies from hard-pressed school and college budgets in order to survive. Enlightened self-interest means that schools and colleges are trying to remain involved in partnerships for as long as possible but as resources are finite it is difficult to plan more than 12 months ahead.

This has raised the urgent need for the development of a coherent resourcing strategy for vocational partnership activities. Most colleges involved in the project argued that this should be developed by the Government and/or the FEFC. It could include:

- a school funding system based on the FEFC model
- extension of the FEFC funding system to pre-16 vocational programmes
- promotion of franchise arrangements between schools and colleges supported by appropriate financial incentive

College staff noted that each of the above approaches had the advantage of in-built monitoring and quality assurance supported by national inspection. They also argued that such approaches may encourage schools to invest in high-cost GNVQs such as Manufacturing rather than, as is now the case, a concentration on the low-cost areas such as Business, and Health and Social Care.

There is little sharing of information and experience between different partnerships. This is regrettable and means that available resources are not being used to best effect. A number of college vocational areas have discovered, for example, that in some aspects of provision it is helpful to use the same approach with all partner institutions. These include work placements, quality assurance, marketing GNVQs, paperwork and computer systems, and a progression framework for low-entry GNVQs. Where different partnerships are working in isolation from each other, each will be investing unnecessary resources in discovering this fact.

FEDA has already made available examples of good practice as part of its GNVQ support programme which gives practitioners prompts for action to be used at different stages of partnership activities. Opportunities to share information and experience will be built into regional and other network meetings organised by FEDA and SCAA.

Clarifying the currency of pre-16 GNVQs and NVQs

All colleges enrolling, or expecting to enrol students with partial GNVQs/NVQs are experiencing difficulty in allocating a value to these achievements for entry level purposes and for negotiating progression routes. They are therefore keen to receive advice from national bodies on how one, two and three units should be treated for these purposes.

Where students progress to courses in the same vocational area, negotiation of progression routes can take account of prior vocational attainment. However, in cases where students do not intend to take a course in the same vocational area as they experienced at KS4, having a clear view of the currency of units becomes particularly important.

Some colleges were using equivalence with GCSEs to define 'progression values' for GNVQs whereby three units of an Intermediate level qualification were equated to two GCSEs at grade C.

However, the Government circular of August 1996 stated that a GNVQ Part 1 at Intermediate level had the equivalence to two GCSEs at grade C and is dependent upon the achievement of three vocational units and the three key skills units.

The GNVQ Part 1 is a coherent qualification (see page 10 for an outline of what it involves) and should ease progression to post-16 institutions for those students who have achieved it.

The project colleges which were working with schools piloting GNVQ Part 1 generally interpreted the guidelines to mean that students with a merit or distinction should progress to the next level of the qualification, but were uncertain as to how they should treat students gaining a pass or unit certification. However, given that a pass at Intermediate level is equivalent to two GCSEs at grade C (as stated in the above-mentioned August 1996 Government circular), progression for individual students would depend on their entire portfolio of qualifications at 16. This also applies to students taking the qualification at Foundation level. Some colleges raised the question of the value of GNVQ Part 1 in comparison with a programme of units selected from a school/college partnership. A programme agreed with a partner college can form the basis of a clear progression route and can be structured to support curriculum continuity and local labour market needs.

Another issue which needs to be addressed is that of the student who has compiled the evidence for a unit but hasn't received accreditation. Systems need to be developed to APL the evidence and fast-track the student through that vocational programme.

Some colleges are using key skills attainment as a bench-mark for progression, which means that vocational units become a secondary consideration for their programme teams.

Colleges taking part in the project argued the case for developing a points or credit profile system for GNVQs and NVQs similar to that being developed for higher education. They also highlighted the need for published advice on how to respond to students arriving with partial qualifications.

A partnership approach to careers education and guidance between schools, colleges and careers services is being promoted through government policy, national publications, Codes of Practice (at both local and national) and local quality standards for careers work. This action is vital in order to ensure that lack of clarity about progression routes and the 'progression value' of pre-16 vocational attainments does not undermine further the status of vocational qualifications.

Securing curriculum continuity

A commonly-held view by those engaged in partnership activities is that a curriculum map identifying links between the KS4 curriculum (including GCSEs), GNVQs and NVQs is a prerequisite for curriculum continuity. Consequently, school and college staff have invested considerable time and effort in producing such maps.

This project has demonstrated that maps can be useful at KS4 when incorporating a GNVQ or NVQ unit into an existing course. Similarly, curriculum maps have helped college staff to take account of KS4 experiences when devising new assessment and recording packages. However, the contribution of such maps to curriculum continuity in vocational studies was less clear. This is largely because mapping takes place at element level while curriculum planning takes place at unit level. In practice, the key factor in achieving curriculum continuity appears to be that schools liaise with local colleges to ensure that they select GNVQ and NVQ units relevant to courses offered by local FE institutions.

If curriculum maps are a prerequisite for curriculum continuity then the national bodies SCAA and NCVQ should ensure that all GCSE syllabuses and GNVQ/NVQ specifications set out in detail how they contribute to other qualifications. The GNVQ Part 1 specifications could provide a model for this. It would also be necessary to produce a summary of how the KS4 curriculum is likely to contribute to GNVQs and NVQs post-16.

This is a complex problem to which there is no simple answer. Some clarity may be added as a result of the continuing development of the GNVQ Part 1 and action being taken in

response to the recommendations made in response to the following reports: *The National Curriculum and its assessment* and *Review of qualifications for 16-19 year olds* both by Sir Ron Dearing; *GNVQ assessment review: final report of the review group* by John Capey (SCAA), and *Review of 100 NVQs and SVQs: a report submitted to the Department for Education and Employment* by Gordon Beaumont (Evaluation Advisory Group).

Further research

FEDA is currently undertaking the following research into curriculum developments for 14 to 19 provision, which may answer some of the issues raised by this project:

- vocational education at KS4
- progression from KS4
- provision of the disaffected schedule

The results of these research projects will be published throughout 1997 and a range of seminars and training events on these and related topics will be available.

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